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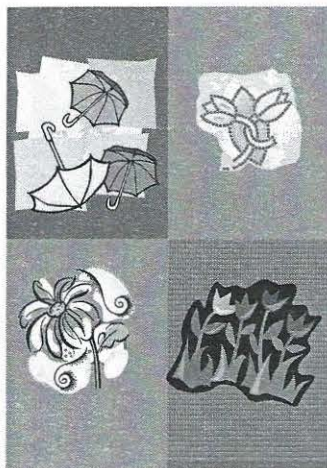


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Wright State University Retirees Association

Issue 70

**Spring
Quarter 2011**

The Extension

The Times, They Are A-Changin' **Marlene Bireley and Mary Gromosiak**

The fallout of the recent depression, the takeover of the state house and legislature by a Republican majority and the reality of a need to change procedures to protect long-term solvency of public retirement systems have combined to produce a volatile and headline-making situation in Ohio and other states.

While most of you can follow the local headlines, out-of-state retirees may be wondering what impact Senate Bill 5 (the Collective Bargaining Bill), recently passed in the Senate by a vote of 17-16, will have on their retirement incomes. Following its passage, SB5 has been sent on to the House of Representatives for discussion and debate before final voting takes place.

In addition to SB5, House Bill 69 (the Ohio Legislation Pension Bill) is also being debated, and we will attempt to summarize their major points. Most of the headlines, protests and anti-protests in Ohio have been concerned with SB5 which, according to one's point of view, is either a union busting proposal or a necessary step to bring public employment into line with the private sector. Proponents say the measure is needed to give governments more flexibility in dealing with budget cuts and economic downturns. As summarized by the *Dayton Daily News* on 2/27/11, the major proposals in the bill and the pro and con talking points are as follows.

1. Remove health care as a bargaining item and require workers to pay at least 20% of their health care costs.

Pro: Private sector workers now pay more than public sector workers.

Con: The largest burden would fall on the lowest paid workers; it removes the employee's voice in this issue.

2. End Collective Bargaining for state workers including public colleges and universities use factors other than seniority to determine layoffs.

Pro: This would give managers more flexibility to set pay to fit budgets.

Con: Worker leverage would be lost on such issues as work schedules, acation time and other benefits.

The Extension

The Extension is published quarterly for the WSU retirees by the Wright State University Retirees Association (WSURA).

Cut off dates for articles:

- Nov. 1—Winter Quarter
- Feb. 1—Spring Quarter
- May 1—Summer Quarter
- Aug. 1—Fall Quarter

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3. Ban local governments from picking up the workers' share of their pension contribution.
Pro: Pension pickups are raises in disguise.
Con: Pension pickups are less costly than direct pay raises.
4. Automatically declare an impasse on the 90th day of bargaining. Employer could demand fact-finding report and, if either side rejects the report, employers could pick and choose the parts of the report to implement.
Pro: This would avoid negotiations that drag on and on.
Con: This would eliminate the leverage to get management to bargain in good faith.
5. Eliminates the right to strike for all state and local government workers, including teachers.
Pro: This blunts the unions' abilities to shut down services.
Con: This eliminates the leverage to get management to bargain in good faith.
6. Eliminates binding arbitration for police and firefighters.
Pro: Arbitrators tend to favor labor and say that employers can raise taxes to cover costs.
Con: Less than 2% of contracts end up in arbitration. It is an essential option since safety forces cannot strike.
7. Replaces automatic pay raises with merit pay increases for local government workers. Eliminates state minimum teachers' salaries of \$20,000 and automatic step increases.
Pro: Raises are unsustainable and lead to service cuts. Pay should be based on performance and market rates.
Con: Merit pay would encourage favoritism. Public workers are not overpaid when education, organization size and experience are taken into account.
8. Prohibit teachers from bargaining on class size, school assignments and other items. Take away state mandated 15-day sick leave and allow for local negotiation on this issue.
Pro: Teachers and others are given more sick leave than the private sector and are allowed to carry it over year after year and get paid for unused sick time.
Con: Teachers are exposed to children carrying germs and need more sick days.
9. Limits continuing contracts for teachers to one-year agreements. Teachers with seven years of experience now have continuing contracts.
Pro: Would give managers flexibility and ability to staff classrooms with the best teachers.
Con: This would undermine Ohio's ability to attract the best and brightest into teaching.

While none of these provisions impact retirees directly, they certainly would have a direct effect on the decision to many of our former students and colleagues either to choose or to continue in public sector employment.

According to an article in the Columbus Dispatch 3/4/11, Republicans control the House 59-40, and opponents of SB5 have not expressed a great deal of optimism that they'll be able to stop the bill. The next option could be a statewide referendum that could stop the law from taking effect until a November ballot initiative that asks voters to strike down the law.

Opponents would have 90 days after the bill is signed to collect 231,147 signatures from registered Ohio voters that amounts to 3% of the total votes cast in the 2010 gubernatorial election. If the Bill is signed the first week of April, the referendum would appear on the November ballot. If the Bill is signed later, the referendum would wait until November 2012 alongside the presidential election and votes on senate for the U.S. Senate and Congress and the state legislature.

House Bill 69 does have a provision that directly impacts retirees in the proposed reduction of the COLA (cost of living adjustment) from 3% to 2% with those retiring after 8/1/11 receiving 1.5%. A recent plan would keep the 2% for all, but would not begin until 60 months after retirement. In addition to the COLA change, general provisions being discussed include raising the age of unreduced benefits to 60 with 30 years of service basing the final average salary on five years rather than the current three

and phasing in employee contributions from the current rate of 10% to 12.5% by 2015.

On 2/9/11, **Chris DeRose**, Chief Executive Officer of OPERS, testified before the Subcommittee on Retirement and Pensions regarding HB69 citing the following five reasons for OPERS general support of the bill.

1. Retirees are living longer. The basic structure of the benefits has not changed since the inception of the plan in 1935, and the longer life of members has a direct effect on the fiscal impact on the system.
2. Eliminates the unfair subsidization of benefits. For instance, the statutory cost of service purchases represents on the average on 20% of the actuarial cost.
3. Encourages member engagement in their retirement. Changes are designed to encourage members to become responsible partners in their retirement planning.
4. The economic downturn of 2008. Most of the downturn has been realized and recent years have returned to good returns.
5. Preserving health care for retirees. To stay within the mandated 30 year amortization, the OPERS Board adopted a plan to slowly decrease funding to the health care program and to cease funding altogether in 2014. Adopting the proposed changes will allow the system to continue funding health care at a 4% level in the foreseeable future – the most important outcome of the proposal.

We wish to emphasize that none of these provisions have been voted into law and proposals and counterproposals are appearing regularly. The complete provisions of this proposed bill are on both the STRS and PERS websites as well as up-to-date information on changes. We urge all retirees to monitor the progress of HB69 and its outcome on your retirement pension.

Spring Activities Calendar

Postponed until Fall

Luncheon and Tour of the WSU Archives (“Miami Valley’s Attic”)

Monday, April 18

Presidential Lecture Series

Apollo Room, Student Union, 7:00pm

Kate Bornstein, Author, Performance Artist, Advocate for Teens, *Freaks and Other Outlaws*

Monday, May 9

Presidential Lecture Series

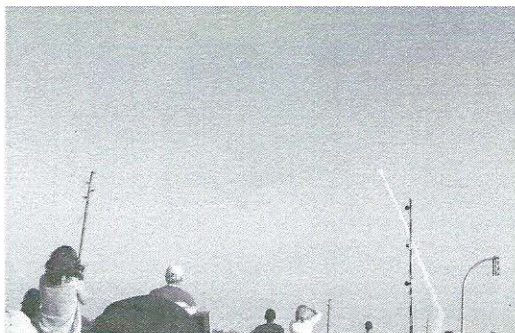
Apollo Room, Student Union, 7:00pm

Jim Hightower, American’s #1 Populist

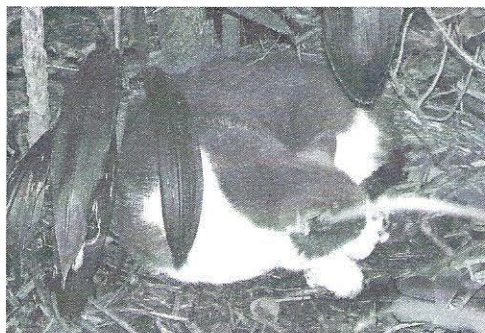
Note: All Presidential Lectures Series events are free and open to the public

TBA

Socrates Café



Launch of the shuttle *Discovery* (see pg. 7)



A Hemingway six-toed cat (see pg. 7)

News from WSURA

Several activities were held over the winter months. A holiday brunch was hosted by **Tom and Helen Listerman**; a January brunch was held at the Beaver Creek Golf Club; and more than twenty members and guests attended the pizza party preceding the WSU/Loyola men's basketball game. Here are a few pictures from those events. Additional ones will be posted on our website (www.wright.edu/admin/retirees).



Sally and Bill Evans and Peggy Bott at the Beaver Creek Golf Club



Christmas brunch at the **Listerman's**



Lou and Pat Falkner, Carol Stevenson and Guest at the basketball pizza party



Scott Nekrosius and Diane Frey at the Beaver Creek Golf Club



Leone Low and Granddaughter at the basketball pizza party

One of our new activities during the past year has been to support international exchange faculty and/or doctoral students. Here is a short description of our experience with the first doctoral student to take advantage of this service. In addition to the activities that Peter describes, a number of our members loaned Fabio household items to help furnish his living quarters while at WSU.

Our International Friend Peter Carusone

Fabio Roveda, Ph.D. student at the University of Bologna, will long be remembered at Wright State not only for dedication to his research but also for his sharing a taste of Italian culture and genuine friendship with so many.

Fabio arrived in Dayton in April 2010 and spent 9 months doing research in the College of Engineering. He quickly acclimated to American culture while participating in a variety of social activities and events under the guidance and camaraderie of members of the Wright State Retirees Association (WSURA). Exposure to American baseball, basketball and learning to play bocce at the Sons of Italy lodge are a few of the memories he took home with him.

Bob Wagley hosted **Fabio** from the beginning of his visit to the end and had plenty of eager assistance from **Abe Bassett**, **Jim Uphoff**, **Peter Carusone** and others. In the Department of Mechanical and Material Engineering, **Fabio** enjoyed working closely with **Dr. J. Shang** and **Dr. G. Huang**. He also made many friends through UCIE (the University Center for International Education) through the experiences that they organize for international students. For both **Fabio** and the many friends that he made, it was a warm and delightful experience for all.



Peter Carusone and Fabio Roveda

President's Message Peggy Bott

I hope by the time you are reading this the snow has all melted and we are starting to have some nice spring days. I know those of you who retired last year were proud to be part of Wright State and don't want to lose your connection to WSU and your former colleagues. WSURA was formed to encourage a continuing relationship between retirees, the University and the Community so we hope you have taken advantage of your one year free membership and will join us in some or all of the activities we have planned.

We are also looking for new members to become involved in our Board. We meet ten times yearly (except January and July) on Wednesday mornings so the time commitment is minimal. Some of you might want to start by becoming involved in a committee such as Membership Development, Bylaws and Elections, Sunshine, Historical Preservation, Activities or Scholarship. Most of these involve targeted commitment for a short period of time each year. Please contact me or one of our Board members with any questions you may have. The best way to reach us is by e-mail, wsura@wright.edu or by calling the office, 775-2777. Those interested in running for Board membership can contact **Judy Rose** at jjrose2@aol.com.

Deaths

Judith Neiman, Vice President of Personnel, Administration, December 2010

Carol Worman, Librarian, Fordham Health Library, December 2010

Robert Lairmore, position unknown, January 2011

George Kirk, Vice President of Administration, February 2011

News from WSU

Michael Barratt, M.D., a 1991 graduate of the Boonshoft School of Medicine Aerospace Medicine Residency program, was one of six astronauts aboard the shuttle *Discovery* that lifted off on its final voyage on February 24. He had previously flown in space aboard a *Russian Soyuz TMA-14* spacecraft.

WSU hosted a Science Olympiad Invitational on February 26 for seventy-six high school teams from four states. This gathering of 1500 students was described as a practice run for a larger Olympiad in 2012 and for 2013 when Wright State will host the National Science Olympiad Tournament. For details, visit wright.edu/scienceolympiad.

One of the casualties of the political change in Columbus was **Eric Fingerhut**, Chancellor of Higher Education, who recently submitted his resignation. Fingerhut was instrumental in creating Centers of Excellence in Ohio state universities while urging them to eliminate redundant and mediocre programs. To quote the *Dayton Daily News* editorial of February 25, "It's a shame. Here was somebody who knows Ohio's wealth of higher education assets inside and out, someone whom the state has invested in, whose plans are working.....**Mr. Fingerhut's** successor has a difficult task. Ohio has seen what excellent leadership of its colleges looks like." We wish him well.

Congratulations to first year men and women's basketball coaches, **Billy Donlon** and **Mike Bradbury**, whose teams finished 19-14 and 18-11 (with the women's tournament incomplete as of this date). The men finished in a tie for fifth in the tightest race in Horizon League history and the women finished fourth and tied a school record for conference wins. Congratulations as well to our student athletes who were named to All-Horizon league honors. **Vaughn Duggins** and **LaShawna Thomas** were named to the first teams; **N'Gai Evans** and **Molly Fox** were named to the second teams; and **Shaunda Sandifer** was named to the all-newcomer team.

Two Ticks Off the Bucket List Marlene Bireley

Like many of you, my cousin and I decided to escape our horrible winter weather and spend the last two weeks of February in warm and sunny Florida. Other than warmth, my other major impetus was to visit friends in declining health. My cousin, an avid cat lover, agreed to the trip on the condition that we visit Key West to see the five-and six-toed cats purported to live at the Hemingway House. I had hoped one day to cross the Everglades and drive through the Keys, so I readily agreed.

After visiting a friend of my cousin's in Orlando and my friends in Naples, we drove through southern Florida. I am sure many of you have traveled this same route. For those of you who confined your traveling to Orlando or the northern coasts, here are some of the highlights of our southern Florida trip. Two routes cross the swampland U.S. 75 and St. Rte. 41 known as the Tamiami Trail. We chose the latter more southern road. Much of the driving is repetitious swampland, but, as my photos show, the nature stops are replete with birds, turtles and the obligatory alligators. We spent a short time at two stops, but one could easily extend hiking to many hours if so inclined.

After leaving the Everglades, we drove to the northernmost Key Largo for our evening stop. For those who equate Florida eating with seafood, I recommend the Fish House and Fish House Encore located on Key Largo. We had many good seafood meals on this trip, but this was the best!

The next morning, we traveled quickly through the many small islands that make up the Keys. I was surprised how much of the drive involved viewing only land. My preconceived notion was that most of the time we would be surrounded by beautiful sea. It is true where you cross the connecting bridges between the islands, but not so true of the islands themselves. Mostly, we saw typical Florida vegetation, rows of fishing, diving and related tourist shops. Scattered in between were the occasional mom and pop restaurants. In Islamorada Key, we stopped at a local eatery, *Mangrove Mike's*, for breakfast. The walls were painted in undersea murals and the waitresses were straight out of the old TV show, *Alice*. The food was terri-

fic and the interaction between staff and patrons was worth the stop – so much so that we stopped again for lunch on the way home.

On Big Pine Key we went in search of the key deer, a small species of deer found only on this key. In spite of the many signs warning of their presence, we drove up and down the main streets in vain. Stopping at a designated ranger station, the on-duty ranger reported that he had seen only three deer in the preceding week, so we assumed that our quest was over. About a mile down the road from the ranger's station, a lone deer sprang from the forest and crossed right in front of us! It was not as small as I had imagined (it was about the size of an Ohio yearling), but, once again, we were pleased to see an example of a local phenomenon.

We arrived at Key West later that day. The famed party atmosphere of Old Town was immediately evident, but, during the daytime, everyone we saw was behaving. However, I can't speak about the late night crowd. Cruise ships were docked each day we were there, so the town was filled with multi-generational shoppers and tourists. Our main destinations, the Hemingway House and the Little White House, were both interesting tours. The city bus tour proved to be a good way to view the city's marvelous architecture.

The ever colorful Hemingway spent many years on the island and his home is filled with memorabilia. The tour guides described his time there as well as his history with his four wives. Coincidentally, just as we were visiting, a new novel, *The Paris Wife*, was published. It is based on Hemingway and his first wife and, after this visit, I am looking forward to reading it. Finally, to my cousin's delight, the property is home to forty-four cats, about half of whom carry the five- or six-toed mitten trait descended from one of Hemingway's own cats. They could be found napping under bushes, in an upstairs bed or in various other places. The guide revealed that nearly half of the upkeep of the property goes to the needs of the feline residents.

The next day we visited the Little White House, a favorite getaway of Harry Truman. The house is still used for occasional official business. For instance, Colin Powell held a meeting there during his tenure as Secretary of State. The home is modest by most standards and certainly reflects the simple man that we have come to equate with

Truman. It is said that he walked the public beaches in spite of security concerns and spent his evenings with his beloved poker and bourbon in spite of Bess' disapproval. One can certainly get a good feel for the man in this, one of his favorite places.

Sometime during our journey we discovered that the shuttle, *Discovery*, was taking its final voyage and that, by staying an additional day, we could view it. Since the shuttle program is winding down, we certainly considered the extra day worthwhile. After several calls, we were able to find accommodations about twenty miles north of Cape Canaveral and trekked up the Atlantic Coast to view this serendipitous extra treat. As the day arrived, our hosts assured us that we could clearly see the launch from the coast behind our motel, but we decided to get a little closer. We correctly opined that Cape Canaveral itself would be overrun with sightseers even though the tours of the base were suspended for the launch. While driving around, quite by accident, we discovered the road to the Merritt Wildlife Sanctuary that is adjacent to the Cape. The sanctuary was closed for the event, but people were allowed to go as far as the bridge that divided the sanctuary from the mainland. From the vantage point on the bridge, we and several hundred others, were within ten miles of the shuttle where we were able to view its magnificent sight. Words fail when trying to describe the beautiful trail of fire and smoke that crossed the cloudless sky and the collective sigh of relief and spontaneous applause that emanated from the crowd as the shuttle broke away into free flight. It was a moment of shared pride, patriotism and reaffirmation of the American spirit that I won't soon forget!

And so we traveled home with two more items on my bucket list completed – to drive the Keys and, quite by accident, to watch a shuttle launch. All in all, it was a very good way to end February and look forward to spring.

